

Age 6

Child Development

Developmental Tasks

- To learn to distinguish between reality and fantasy.
- To become comfortable with own gender identity.
- To make connections and distinctions between feelings, thoughts, and actions.
- To solve problems by initiating and creating.

Indicators Related to Developmental Lag

- Excessive fears; extreme separation anxiety; bedwetting; shyness; threatening or bullying peers; inhibited play; ritualistic behaviors, especially around food; persistent speech problems and problems centering around toileting; excessive fear of strangers; lack of interest in others.

Note: Although these tasks and indicators may be present during ages 3 to 7, each may be more observable at specific times.

Physical Development

Normal Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
Is vigorous, full of energy, and generally restless, e.g., foot tapping, wiggling, being unable to sit still.	Provide opportunities for a variety of physical activities.
Is clumsy due to poor coordination. Is in an ugly duckling stage. Has growth spurts.	Don't point out or emphasize clumsiness or change of appearance.
May occasionally wet or soil him-/herself when upset or excited.	Accept accidents calmly as the child is apt to be embarrassed.
Has marked awareness of sexual differences; may want to look at bodies of opposite sex (playing doctor, house, etc.); touches and plays with genitals less frequently; will accept the idea that a baby grows in the womb.	Give simple, honest answers in a calm manner.
Has unpredictable preferences and strong refusals; often develops a passion for peanut butter.	Provide balanced meals, but don't be overly concerned with child's preferences or passion.
Eats with fingers and talks with mouth full.	Don't overreact; set a good example.
Commonly suffers more colds, sore throats, and other illness, because of exposure at school.	Be aware of disease symptoms. Crankiness may precede an illness. Child needs plenty of rest and balanced meals.

Intellectual Development

Normal Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
May develop stuttering when under stress.	Remember, language disturbance is temporary and may disappear of its own accord.
Wants all of everything and finds it difficult to make choices.	Do not offer excessive choices, but provide opportunities for making decisions.
Begins to have organized, continuous memories; most children learn to read and write, although some don't until after age 7.	Promote child's reading and writing (e.g., letters to relatives and friends, opportunity to create stories).

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Social Development

Normal Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
May blame mother for anything that goes wrong. Male children will identify strongly with father.	Provide consistent, caring responses to child's blame or over-identification.
Child doesn't like being kissed in public, especially boys.	Be sensitive.
Identifies with adults outside the family (e.g., teacher, neighbor).	Accept this as okay.
Friendships are unstable; is sometimes unkind to peers; is a tattletale.	Provide guidance in making and keeping friends.
Must be a winner; changes rules to fit own needs; may have no group loyalty.	Help child to be a good loser.
In school, may develop problems if expectations are too high; has trouble concentrating; may fool around, whisper, or bother other children.	Keep in touch with the school. Be alert for feelings of frustration and failure in the child.
Perpetual activity makes meals difficult. Breakfast may be the most difficult meal.	Allow extra time for breakfast.

Emotional Development

Normal Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
Feels insecure as a result of drive toward independence.	Give child time, freedom, and opportunities to practice being independent.
Finds it difficult to accept criticism, blame, or punishment.	Be patient and understanding.
Child is center of own world and tends to be boastful.	Accept apparent selfishness.
Generally is rigid, negative, demanding, unadaptable, slow to respond; exhibits violent extremes; tantrums reappear.	Set reasonable limits, offer explanation of limits, help child keep within them.
If not the winner, often makes accusations that others are cheating.	Avoid games that designate a winner.

Moral Development

Normal Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
Is very concerned with personal behavior, particularly as it affects family and friends; sometimes blames others for own wrongdoing.	Teach the child to be concerned and responsible for own behavior. Assure child that everyone makes mistakes.